

BlueDevil II

88th Regional Readiness Command

Spring 2005 Vol. X, No. 1

Blue Devil Heroism in Iraq



www.usarc.army.mil/88thrsc/

CG's Corner

Brig. Gen. Michael W. Beasley



To paraphrase baseball Hall of Fame player Satchel Paige, "Don't never look back, somethin' may be gaining on you."

As I near the last three months of a dynamic and immensely rewarding command tenure, there are too many challenges ahead to spend much time looking back.

We have a Senior Leader Warfighters' Council in Minneapolis in May, at which time I will be sharing with our senior leaders the information gathered from April conferences at TRADOC, FORSCOM and USARC ... our senior commands which set training and operational policies for our future.

The "way ahead" certainly includes more mobilizations and deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan; unit creations, conversions and divestitures; Soldier re-training and retention requirements; and moving into new roles and missions for the RRC. In essence, we'll see a continuation of one of the most challenging periods in this Command's illustrious history.

At the helm will be Brig. Gen. Bob Pollmann, an exceptional officer and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veteran – and our former G-3. Bob is ideally suited to lead the Blue Devils into this new period of tasks and accomplishments.

We will be completing soon a Memorial at the Headquarters at Ft. Snelling for our 15 Soldiers killed-in-action during OIF, a somber tribute to the commitment and sacrifice shared by our 15,000 Soldiers (and families) who have deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism over the past three and one-half years.

As I write this, I am preparing for the funeral of an extraordinary Blue Devil Soldier, Spc. Gavin Colburn of our 542d TC Company (cross-leveled from the 656th TC Company), who died from an IED explosion April 21. Gavin, like so many of our Soldiers who have died in

combat, was killed in the course of heroically trying to protect another Blue Devil Soldier ... and in the midst of performing yet another difficult mission for our country. Such profound pride, mixed with profound sadness, is an experience I will not miss very much after retiring from military service.

We also are preparing to dedicate a Hall of Heroes at Headquarters, remembering all of our Soldiers who have received valorous awards, including the Silver Star medal, Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device, and Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device. The Hall also will recognize by name our Purple Heart recipients – those injured or killed in combat, who wear the first military award of our Nation's history.

Heading our list of heroes from the current conflict is recent Silver Star medal recipient Spc. Jeremy Church, of the 724th Transportation Company, who was honored in a ceremony this past February at Fort McCoy, and who received this prestigious award from the USARC Commander, Lt. Gen. Ron Helmly. We are all proud to have the only Silver Star medal awarded to a Reserve Soldier during OIF worn by a fellow Blue Devil. It is impossible to read or hear the narrative of his courageous actions which led to his receipt of the Silver Star medal without feeling great emotions.

We all continue to remember and pray for the safe return of newly promoted Sgt. Matt Maupin, also of the 724th TC. Matt remains the only military service member who is currently in a captured status. We promoted Matt to sergeant in early April, as permitted by Army regulations, because of his heroic actions in captivity ... and because it was the right thing to do.

Commander's column
continued on page 4

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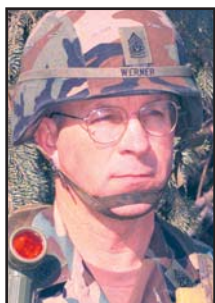
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For change of address, do not write the magazine. TPU soldiers should notify their unit full-time support personnel. Members of the IRR and IMA should contact their Personnel Management Team at AR-PERSCOM, 1 Reserve Way, St. Louis, MO 63132-5200. AGRs should contact their PMO/PMNCO.



Command Sgt. Maj. John Werner

From the Top

A personal pleasure of mine is meeting 88th

Blue Devil Soldiers returning from theater. I've tried to be on site for every arriving unit to shake every returning Blue Devil Soldier's hand.

Spending that time focusing on meeting Soldiers has allowed me to observe the demobilization process. For returning Soldiers . . . your mission is to demobilize. This involves getting all your questions asked and getting all your paperwork correctly filled out. You need that check in the box from the demobilization station.

I know, I've been there, as soon as you step off of that plane and your boot touches the tarmac it turns into a race to get everything completed. You want the separation order with the reassignment to Fort Living Room.

It's very important for you to take care of everything correctly at the mob station before you go home. If you have any vital issues that need completing before coming off of active duty take care of them at the mob station, because you are going to have a hard time taking care of it once you return home. I urge you to slow down and take your time going through the demobilization process. Pay issues, medical issues, and other issues are much easier to take care of before you are off of active duty.

Remember too that when you leave theater and arrive at your mob station, it is not easy to escape the burden of combat. Everyone carries the after effects of combat differently. It's okay to need help, and it's even okay to stay longer at the mob station to get information on coping with it.

It's nothing to be ashamed of, and you are hurting yourself and perhaps your family if you don't ask for help.

People will ask you about your combat experiences, so just answer with the truth. But remember, they will never completely understand what you went through unless they've experienced the crucible of combat.

The Veterans Administration (VA) has a lot of good information and programs available to help you assimilate back into your life. So pay attention, take notes or do whatever you have to do to retain the information they put out. It's important! The VA even has outreach storefront drop-in centers. The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the American Legion have information for these places and other VA benefits.

Take the Point!

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On the cover

A vehicle burns after a mine strike in Iraq during a 724th Transportation Company convoy. A Soldier from the unit received a Silver Star medal for heroism during an attack on a different convoy (see Silver Star pages 14-16).

U.S. Army photo

On the back

Soldiers from the 330th Military Police Company are welcomed home to Sheboygan, Wis. after deploying to Iraq.

Associated Press photo

From the editor

The *Blue Devil II* is for soldiers, DA civilians and family members. We invite readers' views.

Please stay fewer than 150 words and include your name, rank and address. Anonymous letters will generally not be used. We may condense your views because of space. We can't publish or answer every one, but we'll use representative views. Write to: Letters, *Blue Devil II*, 506 Roeder Circle, Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4009, or email: 88PAO@usarc-emh2.army.mil

Commander's column continued from page 2

I do need help from all of you for a number of important projects and missions:

- Help us complete our Blue Devil Hall of Heroes by letting HQ know of anyone who may have been left out (for example, cross-leveled Soldiers who deployed with units of other RRCs), and who received either awards for valor or the Purple Heart;

- Donate display items to our 88th Blue Devil museum for our exhibits on Desert Storm, and missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Most importantly, I solicit your good ideas for innovative training, for ways of improving officer and NCO leadership, and for making maximum use of our incredibly strong corps of combat veterans.

And keep looking forward

Blue Devils!

COMMENTARY: The perceptual paradox

Human Relations and Military Equal Opportunity Programs seem to be so misunderstood by so many. However, every tool and training aide is readily available and accessible. These programs are mandatory and are so for a reason. As humans, we all are socialized differently. The impacts of when and where we grew up, the size of our families, single parent families, nuclear and extended families, economic status as well as education levels all seem to have an impact. During our growing up process or socialization, we're ex-

were exposed (socialized) to Equal Opportunity in a head on; throw them in a room and let them fight it out scenario. It soon was apparent that was not the way to discuss situations so deeply rooted with out beliefs and values. It was more than uncomfortable and so many learned to avoid the topic of EO entirely. Unfortunately, topics of race and gender require mature, rational and well thought out discussion. Far too often these topics are not discussed out of fear of disagreement with personal points of view and /or fear of personal criticism.

The perception of many concerning Equal Opportunity is that of political correctness and that it's only for "those people."

posed to what we're told is right and wrong. We have little reason to doubt what is told to us especially by family. This information is programmed at an early age. Unfortunately, that's where the paradox begins.

What we're taught, by whom, when and why all have an impact. Over time, these thoughts of who's right, wrong, good, bad, mix with views of race, color, gender, national origin and sexual preference. All are learned views, and seldom are those views, especially those seen as racist or sexist, permitted to be exposed. Exposing what we believe to be true may harm us thus we don't speak of them. A paradox is formed within most humans. The perception of many concerning Equal Opportunity is that of political correctness and that it's only for "those people." Nothing could be further from the truth and the paradox continues.

Years ago, older service members

That fear of discussing issues we all have views about tears at the very cohesion and combat effectiveness of some units. History confirms this. I would ask all Soldiers and civilians of the 88th to get involved in Consideration of Other's discussions, and when issues of race or gender arise, discuss them, don't avoid it or put it off. Gone unchecked, the situation will not improve and race and gender relations will begin to deteriorate and polarization occurs.

As the command's Military Equal Opportunity Specialist, I can assure you everyone has their own deeply rooted and learned views about race and gender. Discussion will clear up the perceptual paradox many maintain, and cohesion and productivity will improve with truth. Take the risk. Thanks.

Richard (Rich) Cox, Equal Opportunity Specialist, 88 RRC

Keep on truckin'

Collision avoidance course prepares transportation unit

The highways throughout Iraq have become the modern battlefield of today. They are inundated with bombs, ambushes, crazy traffic and goat herds. Every day, Army truck drivers hauling fuel and supplies need to deal with these dangers.

Sgt. 1st Class Chris Sturz, Training NCO for the 353rd Transportation Company (TC), 88th Regional Readiness Command, wanted to prepare his Soldiers for what they will experience in unforgiving conditions like Iraq or Afghanistan. He said he had to think "outside the box" to provide hands on, realistic experiences.

That's when he thought about sending his Soldiers to college.

The Chippewa Valley Technical College is located in the Chippewa River valley of western Wisconsin. The school offers a Collision Avoidance course that focuses on skill enhancement and improvement primarily in the area of emergency reaction training.

"This is extremely valuable to soldiers, especially soldiers just coming from AIT (Advanced Individual Training) and new to the unit and their 88M MOS (military occupational specialty)," said Sturz. "These soldiers have little hands on experience or (knowledge of) the capabilities of these vehicles."

Following the classroom session, drivers move to the driving range and are exposed to training in off road recovery (dropping off the shoulder and returning to road) jack knife recovery, evasive steering, emergency stopping, serpentine, and tightening roadways. Fatigue and

bad weather driving are also covered.

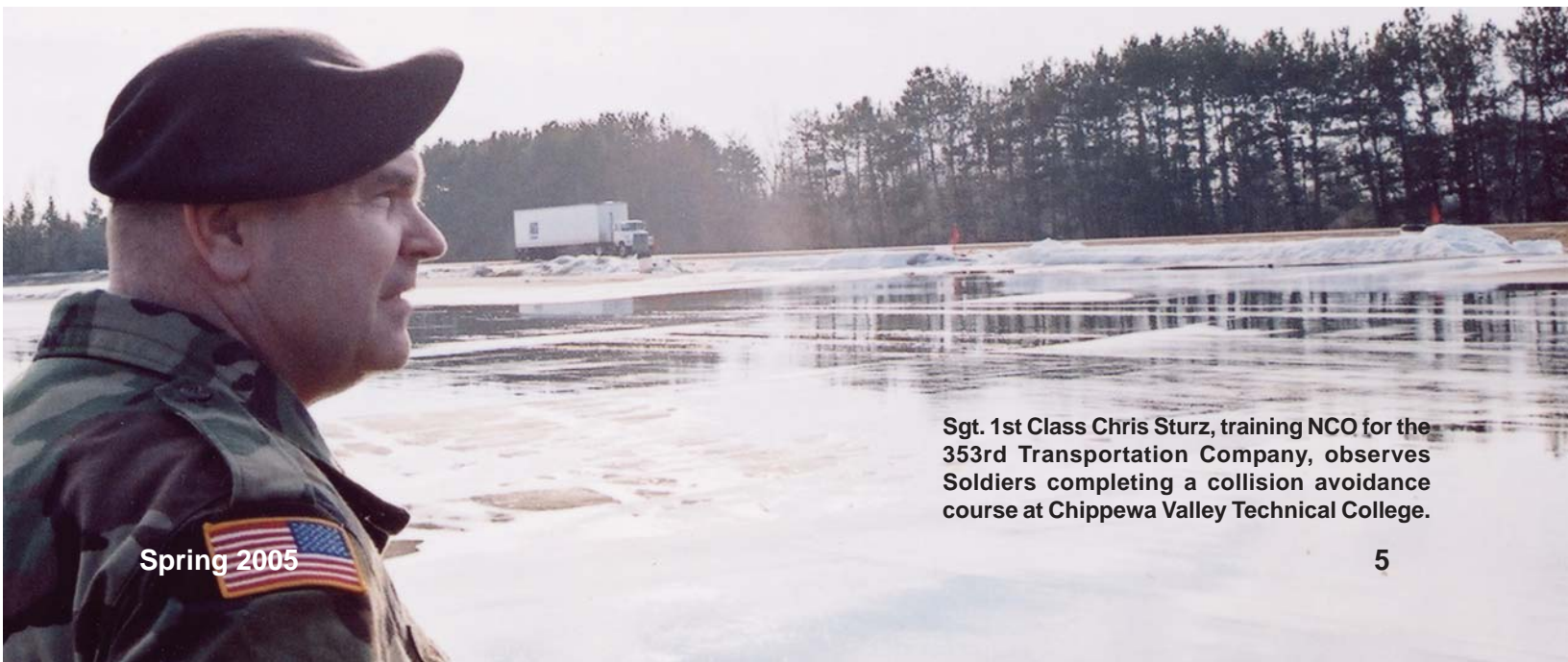
"The experienced veteran drivers will not only gain much needed refresher experience that they routinely need for their MOS tasks, but their civilian employers would also gain from the training," said Sturz. "Because of that, employer relations with the Army Reserve could benefit in this time of frequent mobilization due the global war on terrorism of their employees."

The unit, located in Buffalo, Minn., has been rotating their Soldiers to the school over a drill weekend this past January, February and March, and scheduled again later this year. They are the first unit to take advantage of this specific training.

Sturz said they are expanding the training to include using the college classrooms for CPR training, thus the soldiers will be Red Cross certified. The soldiers are scheduled to train on using the Automated External Defibrillator (AED) They will be using the track at night for night vision goggle training with the trucks.

Sgt. Steve Vincent, a truck driver with the 353rd TC, has 22 years of military experience. He was mobilized in 2002 and drove trucks in Iraq during the initial attack. "In the Army, good training is everything. And the Army can't move without trucks, so that's what I do," he said. "It's the best MOS to have. How often can you see the country and get paid for it?" ♦

**By Sgt. 1st Class Susanne Aspley,
88th Regional Readiness Command Public Affairs Office**



Sgt. 1st Class Chris Sturz, training NCO for the 353rd Transportation Company, observes Soldiers completing a collision avoidance course at Chippewa Valley Technical College.



Many tools, many mines

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan, — As the young engineer unzips his bag and removes his mine detector, he surveys the sandy, wind-swept hills he is about to clear. Before him sit bunkers, trenches and piles of junk — all potential spots to hide mines or improvised explosive devices.

“Clearing minefields is a long, slow, time-consuming process, and there is no room for error,” said Capt. Jonathan Zimmer, the assistant officer

in charge of the Mine Action Center. “With that much armor it can definitely withstand a mine blast,” Gallup said.

In addition to the mechanical devices, dogs from the 67th Demining Dog Detachment are used. The 67th is the only unit in the Army that has such dogs, Gallup said. They are trained to work closely with the engineers in finding mines.

A dog will narrow the possible location of a mine to about a square

thing from the dogs being able to pick up the scent of a mine to the machinery getting bogged down in mud. Summers in Afghanistan are ideal for mine clearing.

“Mine clearing is not all about going out to the field with a metal detector and an up-armored bulldozer,” said Zimmer. “We must look through old logs and try to figure out what areas are already clear and what need the most attention.”

“Usually, we will go through a minefield first with an ‘Aardvark medium flail.’ Once that is finished, we send in the engineers and dogs.”

Story and photos by Spc. Jason Krawczyk, 20th Public Affairs Detachment

meter, and then the engineer uses his probe to locate the mine. If dogs are not available, an engineer may go in to the field with a Handheld Standoff Mine Detection System, which has metal-detecting capability and ground-penetrating radar.

in charge of the Mine Action Center. “We go by NATO standards, ... which means we have to use two types of methods to clear a minefield and must obtain 99.6 percent clear.” The soldiers of the 367th Engineer Battalion have multiple tools at their disposal to meet the requirements needed to consider a minefield clear, said Staff Sgt. Joshua Gallup, a combat engineer team leader with the 367th’s Company B. “Usually, we will go through a minefield first with an ‘Aardvark medium flail.’ Once that is finished, we send in the engineers and dogs,” he said.

The Aardvark is a mechanical flail with an armored cab capable of withstanding 7.62 mm armor-

Weather plays a major factor in clearing a minefield. It impacts every-

meter, and then the engineer uses his probe to locate the mine. If dogs are not available, an engineer may go in to the field with a Handheld Standoff Mine Detection System, which has metal-detecting capability and ground-penetrating radar.

(Far left) Spc. Felife Hernandez, a minesweeper with Company A, 367th Engineer Battalion, sweeps for landmines in a trench at a new engineer training area. He is using a Handheld Standoff Mine Detection System, which has metal-detecting capabilities and ground-penetrating radar.

(Below) Staff Sgt. Bauer Ronald, of Company B, 367th Engineer Battalion, operates an MV-4 Flail. The MV-4 is a remote-controlled mine-clearing device.



Late night with Dave

Last December while deployed to Talil, Iraq, Spc. Christine Tollison, 88th Regional Readiness Command, grabbed the spotlight when she sang in front of nearly 4,000 Soldiers. She also impressed someone else, David Letterman.

Tollison's performance was part of "The Late Show with David Letterman," produced especially for the service members that aired in the United States on Christmas Eve.

Tollison, a postal clerk with the 329th Postal Company, had gained a reputation in Talil as a singer, often doing karaoke with other troops. Her base commander recommended that she sing when Letterman came to the base to do several shows. "Christmas Eve came and Dave, Biff, and Paul (from the Late Night Show) came into the Garrison Support Command Building. I was pulled aside and asked what songs I knew. I was in shock...I was talking to Paul Shaffer!" she said.

"Eventually we decided on 'Let's Hear it for the Boy.' Paul and I practiced for about three minutes before Dave needed to start the show," said Tollison. "I was pacing behind the stage. I couldn't breathe! I was so nervous. Then I got on stage and talked to Dave and I calmed down. He made me feel very welcome."

The troops were delighted Letterman came to do a show. "He came to visit us on Christmas Eve of all days, when he could've been at home with his family, but he made us his family for that 40-minute show," Tollison said. "I'm not sure what precautions entertainers have to go through, but, anyone who steps into that environment is putting their life on the line. Dave does it, and we all ap-

Spc. Christine Tollison, meets David Letterman prior to singing on his show in Talil, Iraq last December. U.S. Army photo



Spc. Christine Tollison, reprises her "Let's Hear it for the Boy" rendition for David Letterman. photo from videotape

preciate it more than we can possibly say."

Tollison remembers the remark she made to Letterman that may have led to her appearance on the show. "I jokingly told Dave 'Maybe I'll come visit you in New York,' and he said something like they'd be glad to have me."

This past February, Tollison returned to the United States. By April, she was back at it again, this time in New York City. Tollison again sang, dressed in Class A uniform, from her seat in the audience with Letterman standing beside her. This was part of the Late Show's "Show and Tell" segment.

Beforehand, Tollison practiced with Paul and the CBS Orchestra. "The Orchestra applauded so loudly after hearing me the first time...I was astonished," she said. "Here I was being cheered for by these amazing musicians. I didn't think it could get any better! Then the show was about to start. We took our seats. The nervousness was really starting to show...but once again as soon as I talked to Dave, I felt calm again."

After she finished singing, Letterman presented Tollison with a gift certificate for dinner for two at 21, a popular New York City restaurant, as well as a CD of music from "The Late Show," and a box of popcorn.

"When the music started playing and the crowd was clapping along, I was glad they were into the music, but I couldn't hear it!" she said. "It made it slightly nerve-racking, but everything worked out. After the show people stopped me and wanted my picture and autograph...I was so overjoyed."

Tollison served nearly one year in Talil. She is currently a junior at Winona State, Minn., and will begin classes again this fall. She is working on a graphic design major with minors in music and mass communications. Tollison is also considering auditioning for a spot with the Soldier Show, or the Army Field Band. ♣

By Susanne Aspley, 88th RRC PAO



Veterans Among Veterans

Sgt. 1st Class Donald Chambers and Staff Sgt. Rick Hosch are an unassuming pair of soldiers. You can tell they've been around a while. They have a quiet confidence as they direct junior soldiers. They run the fueling point with efficiency. This, of course, is the way they should perform as NCOs in the U.S. Army. But these NCOs bring something to the operation that most cannot. Between them they have close to sixty years of military experience.

They both serve with the 300th Quartermaster Co. from Peru, Ill. and recently returned from Iraq where they were assigned to the 4th Infantry Div. during the first year of Operation Iraqi Freedom. They are fuel distribution specialists.

Chambers and Hosch were in the Republic of Panama supporting New Horizons 2005. New Horizons is a humanitarian cooperative effort between the Republic of Panama and the United States that offers medical, dental and veterinarian care, along with constructing schools and community centers throughout the province of Los Santos.

As they talk, their experience resonates. "I never let my people do anything I wouldn't do," Chambers said, standing in front of a fuel trailer waiting for the next military vehicle to pull up and be topped off with fuel. Hosch quickly agreed.

"The gunners on our gun trucks were always out on the road providing security for convoys," said Chambers. "They needed a break so we went out."

"You see all these young kids come in," Chambers continued. "They all

saw that we would do anything they did. . . we even took our turn at K.P."

If it weren't for the Combat Infantry Badge situated above Hosch's uniform pocket, the uninformed might not think of him as a combat veteran. Not only is he a veteran of the recent operation in Iraq, he is also a veteran of Desert Storm and three combat tours in Vietnam. He was awarded the Silver Star medal, two Bronze Star Medals and four Purple Heart medals.

As a forward observer, Hosch often found himself "right at the front

days left in country when the booby-trap went off. He volunteered to go on a patrol because he was one of the few in his company that had been in the assigned patrol area.

Chambers was also in Vietnam. As a 19 year old Marine infantryman he was sent with his platoon to protect evacuees at the American embassy in March of 1974. North Vietnamese forces were attacking while people were being loaded on to helicopters as Saigon fell.

"We were stationed off the coast of Vietnam and before we left the ship, the Chaplain came in," said Chamber. "He said, 'we're going to send you in but we don't know if we can bring you back.'"

After 16 hours of putting people who were desperate to leave the besieged embassy on helicopters, 36 of Chambers fellow Marines waited for their turn. Six hours later one of the last American helicopters to touch Vietnamese soil came for them.

"It was dark," Chambers started again, his eyes shaded with sun glasses. "You could see people moving but you didn't know who they were and then we were fired on."

Chambers admitted that was a lot to take as a teenager but he said he did what he had to do. He continues with that attitude today. Although he was eligible for retirement when he returned from Iraq, Chambers decided that in order to help the younger soldiers adjust to their return he would stay one more year.

Hosch, on the other hand, said he was going to "stay in until they throw **By Sgt. Maj. Robert Cargie, 318th Public Affairs Operation Center**



Staff Sgt. Rick Hosch (right) and Sgt. 1st Class Donald Chambers' careers have spanned three wars: Vietnam, Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

of the action," as he put it. Even when asked directly, Hosch was reluctant to speak of his experiences in Vietnam. He finally told why he was awarded four Purple Hearts

"I was shot three times," Hosch said looking down to the ground. "The last time I was injured by a booby-trap; that was serious. The guy in front of me who stepped on the trap . . . well, there was nothing left of him."

As Hosch continued, the tone of his voice became much more matter-of-fact. "I spent 2 ½ years in the V.A. (Veterans' Affairs) hospital after that," Hosch said.

Hosch said that he had only two

A Tough Job Made Tougher

88th RRC Soldier competition boards test skills better than before

It is a room where the toughest and most experienced Soldiers have been known to fold under the pressure of just sitting in the room.

For others, a single incorrect answer to a posed question in this same room can send a Soldier reeling into mental deconstruction. Simple questions can become complicated questions, and any shred of confidence evaporates instantly.

The room in its entirety is generic and not specific, but what dwells inside is five command sergeants majors sitting behind one long table. Each dressed for perfection in their Class "A" uniforms, with more ribbons perched on their green coats than any candidate facing the board has earned in their comparatively short career.

The appearance board was the final stage for candidates that competed for induction into this year's Sergeant Audie Murphy Club (SAMC) and for the top Soldiers competing for the single coveted title of the 2005 88th Regional Readiness Command's (RRC) Soldier or NCO (noncommissioned officer) of the Year. The competitions were held at Fort Snelling, Minn. from April 14-17.

Past SAMC, Soldier and NCO of the year competitions held at the 88th RRC were strictly an appearance board. This year's competition was changed dramatically with the increase of four additional tasks: a record Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT), a written land navigation test, weapon qualification on the Laser Marksman Training System (LMTS) and a drill and ceremony test.

The night before competitions began, Command Sgt. Maj. John S. Werner, command sergeant major of the 88th RRC, talked to all competing candidates and their sponsors at a welcoming get together.

"This is the first year that we've done what we are doing. Again trying to raise the level of competition and raise the level of the experience because in the past we haven't had the time or the money to go and do what we are doing this year," said Werner.

Compared to the higher echelon competitions like the United States Army Reserve Command (USARC) or United States Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), the 88th RRC past competitions were conducted on a smaller scale due to money, time and location restrictions. 88th candidates weren't be able to do an actual live fire weapon qualification or perform hands on land navigation with a

compass in a wooded area, but tasks mirroring the mentioned events were applied to the competition. The new incorporation of events centers on providing the same competitive and stressful feel for what the next level will bring, except in a smaller arena.

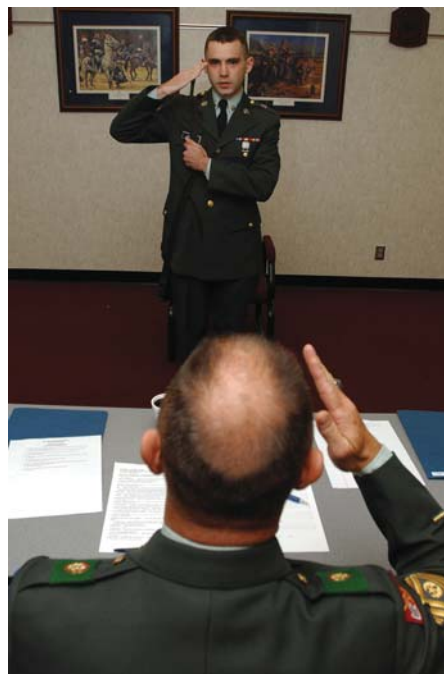
"I like this different approach. It's the total Soldier in the competition. People who are strong in one field and may be a little bit weaker in the other can shine in their area and I think the board gets to understand a little bit better the whole Soldier rather than just what they see in a short interview," said Sgt. Troy D. Chatwin, a public affairs print journalist with the 367th Mobile Public Affair Detachment.

On a cool Friday morning, trials that would test both the physical and mental prowess for each candidate began early. Approximately 17 Soldiers appeared in their grey and black Improved Physical Fitness Uniform (IPFU) on Nieman Polo Fields located at Fort Snelling.

Soon after the APFT, the candidates took a written test on map reading. The test quizzed each Soldier on important land navigation information.

Soldiers who are serious about competing at this competition need to seriously work on their Physical Training (PT), marksmanship and Warrior Training Tasks (WTT). "All of that is key to success in this area because they are looking for the all Soldier, (all-around Soldier) not just one little fragment," said 1st Sgt. Leroy R. Driffel.

The third event was a test that assessed each Soldier's basic marks-



Spc. David N. Angeli III from the 322nd Maintenance Company salutes Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffery E. Uhlig, the 88th RRC board president.

manship skills through simulation. Similar to firing on the range, each candidate would have a basic familiarization with their weapon, zero their weapon's sight and then qualify on their M-16.

The major change is that all weapons would be modified to fire laser beams and all qualifications are done indoors. Pop-up targets are replaced by remote targets that register hits on a laptop computer. Soldiers would engage a number of different sized silhouettes from the supported and the prone unsupported firing position.

A drill and ceremony test ended the first day of competition. Similar to the NCO Schools, candidates were required to march at least three other candidates and call various marching commands correctly.

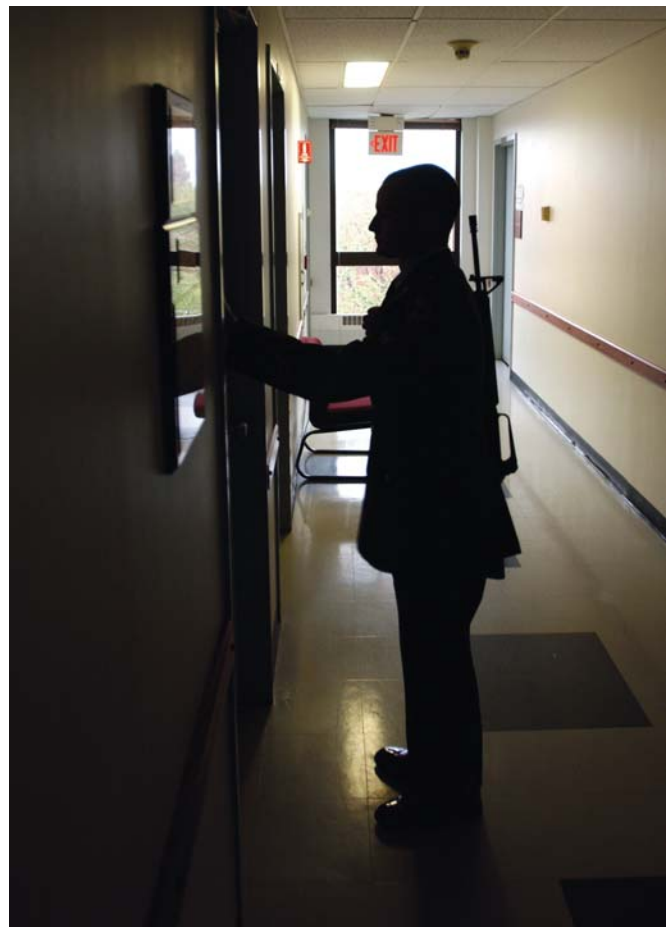
On the night the CSM met with all the candidates and sponsors he passed on some advice. "The biggest defeat an individual suffers in front of the board is themselves because they start to mentally process that I'm not doing good. I'm failing, and so then they just accelerate that downward trend because they miss a couple questions . . . they miss three questions. Understand in most competitions 50 percent of the questions is all you get. So if you rate above that then you're doing pretty good."

"I don't know if going first is a good thing or the bad part but it's out of the way now," said a relieved Spc. Michael L. Dye from the 447th Military Police Company. Dye met with the surprise of having to go first in front of the appearance board for Soldier of the Year. A Soldier was originally scheduled to appear before Dye but later was unable to make the competition.



Sgt. James E. McKinnies from the 766th Trans. Bat. uses the Laser Marksmanship Training System for the 88th RRC NCO of the Year board.

When each candidate's time approaches for their board appearance, a simple knock at the door is what starts the whole experience. Reporting with an M-16 at sling arms, candidates know before they are cross-examined that they will have to perform drill and ceremony with their weapon. From there, Soldiers take a seat and each board member takes their turn asking questions in ar-



Spc. Michael L. Dye from the 447th Military Police Company is the first Soldier to report and knock on the door where a board for the 88th RRC's Soldier of the Year board at Fort Snelling, Minn. on April 16.

eas like military courtesies or current events.

When the last Soldier appeared and the board adjourned, Spc. Daniel J. Denure, from the Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 646th Area Support Group was named Soldier of the year with Spc. Francisco J. Rivera, from the 338th Army Band being named as the alternate. Sgt. 1st Class Eric J. Rupp, from the 216th Quartermaster Company was named NCO of the Year with Chatwin named as alternate. Alternate Soldiers were selected for each category in case the winner could not compete at the next level.

"I personally take away a measurement of my skills as a Soldier. Every once in a while in the Army we have measurements of us but this one is actually an objective measurement by someone else looking deep at my weaknesses and trying to decide out of the group of Soldiers here who is the best Soldier. For me that is a tough thing to put yourself through to find out how you measure," said Chatwin.♣

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley, 88th RRC PAO



Soldiers from the 324th Engineer Detachment (Firefighter) from St. Louis, Mo. load an “injured” Soldier onto a stretcher while training on a helicopter crash-and-rescue scenario. The Soldiers were on annual training in Panama.

Crash And Rescue Training

With lights flashing, two fire, crash and rescue trucks raced towards the helicopter landing pads, kicking up clouds of dust as they went. The drivers had determined looks on their faces. The emergency radio call was blunt: “A Black Hawk helicopter made a ‘hard landing’ and the crew is injured!” Luckily, in this case, the radio call was invented. The incident was a drill.

“This is our primary mission,” Staff Sgt. Tim Dines said. “Whether it’s a helicopter or airplane we have to know how to get in there and get the crew out.”

Dines, along with five other fire fighters participated in the practice accident drill. According to Dines, the crew’s noncommissioned officer in charge, the best time to refine a crash and rescue crewman’s skills is on

annual training. All the fire fighters are with the 324th Engineer Detachment (Fire Fighter) from St. Louis, Mo. They are supporting New Horizons 2005 in the Republic of Panama.

New Horizons is a humanitarian cooperative effort between the Republic of Panama and the United States which offers medical, dental and veterinarian care, along with constructing schools and community centers throughout the province of Los Santos.

As a full-time firefighter at Ft. Campbell, Ky., Dines has first-hand knowledge of the importance of drills like this.

“You have to know the aircraft,” said Dines. “You have to know how to move methodically while assessing the scene and the level of injury of the crew.”

The helicopter used in the drill belongs to the 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation Regiment of the Kansas Army National Guard. Chief Warrant Officer Jim Rostine, the battalion’s safety officer, helped plan the exercise.

“There is a requirement that we have and test some level of crash and rescue capabilities wherever we go,” Rostine said. “Even if our capabilities consist of only what we have inherent to the unit,” which he described as handheld extinguishers that produce fire suppression foam.

Pvt. Kevin Good, 19, had only been part of one other practice exercise before when he was going through his initial training. Soaked with sweat from wearing a heavy, silver, fire-protection suit, Good had an expression of satisfaction on his face after the



(Upper left) 324th Soldiers simulate extracting an injured Soldier from a helicopter crash while on annual training in Panama. (Above) A Soldier simulates spraying a hose during training. (Left) Soldiers evacuate an "injured" Soldier using a stretcher.

drill was complete. He was generous in his assessment of the exercise.

"I didn't see one mistake," Good said wiping his brow. "Our communication was excellent and the training was great."

First Lt. Randy Matthews from Wichita, Kans. is a pilot with 1-108th Aviation. He has experienced the dangers of flying and was involved in an incident at the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, Calif. Two helicopters from his unit collided during a

air and reduced visibility to zero. Another helicopter was already on the ground near where the Cobra pilot wanted to touch down. The Cobra struck the other helicopter and the pilot of the Cobra was pinned in the aircraft as a result. The crews on the ground were able to extract the affected pilot but Matthews said that it was as much luck as it was skill.

"That incident required us to take care of ourselves, but that does not compare to the dedicated profession-

als I saw here today," Matthews said after observing the drill.

Matthews has worked in some sort of military aircraft since he was 19, first as an aerial observer and then as a pilot. With his 17 years of experience he knows the importance of a trained and equipped crash and rescue team.

Giving deference to people who might one day be required to get him out of a critical situation, Matthews strongly endorsed the fire fighters that were involved in the drill.

"Their work today boosted my confidence," Matthew said. "It's reassuring to know they're there." ♦

Story and pictures by Sgt. Maj. Robert F. Cargie, 318th PAOC



A vehicle burns after a mine strike in Iraq during a 724th Transportation Company convoy. A Soldier from the unit received a Silver Star medal for heroism during an attack on a different convoy.

U.S. Army photo

Blue Devil Soldier saves lives and is awarded the Army... Silver Star

Story by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley, 88th RRC PAO

Spc. Jeremy Church's platoon sergeant said he wasn't surprised to see Church awarded the Silver Star medal.

Church, a member of the 724th Transportation Company from Bartonville, Ill., returned with his unit Wednesday, Feb. 23 from a 14-month long deployment to Iraq.

Two days later, after the unit permanently arrived back on American soil, over 440 family members and 130 Soldiers from the 724th gathered at Fort McCoy to witness Church become the first Army Reserve Soldier to be awarded the third highest medal, the Silver Star medal, for heroic actions during the Global War on Terrorism.

"He deserves it. He did some amazing things out there on that day. He helped save a lot of lives that could have been lost without his initiative," said Sgt. 1st Class David R. Groff, 2nd platoon leader of the 724th Transportation Company.

Groff said April 9, 2004 was the day that Church performed remarkably. It was a day that Church labeled "rough" for the unit. 1st Lt. Matthew R. Brown, the 724th Transportation Company convoy commander on April 9, defined Church's actions as a Soldier that remained calm and in control during the brutal conditions the unit faced during that convoy.

Two Soldiers, Sgt. Elmer Krause and Pfc. Gregory Goodrich, made the ultimate sacrifice with their lives in a battle with enemy insurgents that numbers were estimated to be over 150 when the 724th convoy was attacked. Spc. Keith "Matt" Maupin of the 724th Transportation Company would be captured during the battle and remains missing today.

On the night of the 724th Transportation Company's welcome home and award ceremony, Brig. Gen. Michael W. Beasley, commanding general of the 88th Regional Readiness Command, stood before an assembly of family members, guests and Soldiers describing the Silver Star medal and preparing the captive audience to be awed during the reading of the citation. Beasley said it is an award that literally speaks for itself and there wasn't anything he could say that would give justice to Church's acts of gallantry that were about to be read.

On April 9th, Church was Brown's driver, which was

the lead vehicle in an emergency fuel mission to the Baghdad International Airport. During the mission, the convoy was attacked by enemy insurgents from the Madr Militia.

According to his medal citation, as soon as Church's vehicle entered the kill zone, insurgents attacked from built up areas with rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices (IED), machine guns and assault rifles. Church drove aggressively to avoid detonating IEDs and hitting objects placed by the enemy to slow the convoy. Within minutes of entering the kill zone, Brown was shot twice in the head by an enemy sniper.

"A round came through the windshield and struck my Kevlar and I was out of it. I was no longer the convoy commander in all reality. As I sat there with my hand over my eye, blood running down my face and my Kevlar shot off into the back seat, I looked over and Church looks at me and to be honest with you . . . the only comfort I felt was that guy driving," said Brown.

Church said that before the convoy set out, Brown was adamant that he learn the convoy commander's job because there might be a day when he'd have to take over the position. April 9th was that day.

Church immediately grabbed his first aid pouch and instructed him to apply the bandage while he continued to drive.

"He put that weapon out the window. He's firing with his right hand and he's driving with his left and he found another hand to put a bandage on my head," said Brown.

An IED exploded and blew out the vehicle's front tire. Church continued to engage the enemy with his M-16A2 while he navigated his vehicle on three tires. Church led the convoy for four miles into a secured perimeter established by a cavalry company from 2-12th Cavalry. He then carried Brown out of the vehicle for immediate medical attention and medical evacuation, according to the citation.

"I knew I had the entire convoy behind me and I knew they were following me. They needed me to get them out of there," Church said.

Church then rallied Soldiers in the secured area and went back to the fire fight he had just left. The Soldiers launched an immediate recovery mission to aid other Sol-



Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, chief of the Army Reserve, pins the Silver Star medal onto the uniform of Spc. Jeremy Church, a Soldier from the 724th Transportation Company.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley

diers and civilians pinned down by enemy fire.

"When he was leaving me, he wasn't done. He was treating casualties, rounding up a quick reactionary force. He was jumping into a vehicle and heading back out into the kill zone. I would hope as Soldiers we would all have the bravery to do the same," said Brown.

Church identified the assistant commander's vehicle among the wreckage of burning fuel trucks and found two wounded Soldiers and four civilian truck drivers. He identified the most severely wounded, and administered first aid to a Soldier that had a sucking chest wound. He applied a bandage and carried the Soldier over to one of the recovery vehicles while exposing himself to enemy fire, according to the citation.

According to the citation, once the wounded were loaded there wasn't enough room for Church to get in. Church instructed the cavalry troopers to take the wounded back to the casualty collection point and he would wait for their return. Ten minutes later the recovery team returned to remove Church from the battle area.

At the end of the citation reading, onlookers watched Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, chief of the Army Reserve, pin the Silver Star medal on Church's left uniform pocket. Church credits his survival and success on that day to his military police background and unit leadership.

"My primary MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) is military police. So basically I credit that." Church also

said, "The unit kept on us all the time so we were always ready to go and professional when we went outside the gates. We were always mission oriented."

His military police background almost kept him from deploying with the 724th.

"He needed a general officer waiver because he had an MOS that didn't fit into the Unit Manning Report," said Capt. Joseph Huber, S-3 operations officer of the 336 Transportation Group.

Huber said Church was a "good fit" for the unit and the 88M, Motor Transport Operator, MOS because he was licensed on all the vehicles and

knew all the weapon systems. Ultimately, he received a waiver allowing him to deploy.

"I was actually very pleasantly surprised when Lt. Brown came back and thanked me that I signed that waiver for Specialist Church because of the fact he saved his life," said Huber.

For Sandy Hankins, Church's mother, she was happy just for him to get back to the United States. Hankins watched the medal ceremony with Church's sister, Ashley, and step-father, Curt.

"I'm extremely proud of him. I actually can't articulate in words how I feel about the whole thing right now," said Hankins after he was awarded the Silver Star medal. Hankins also said, "It hit me more just listening to someone reading the citation other than me reading it myself. It was just overwhelming."

Church said one of the worst things he saw was his lieutenant (Brown) and friend get shot. "Matt and I are close friends. I worked on Pfc. Goodrich when he passed away and that was hard to see. Stuff like that--those are probably the two key points that really bother me from that day. Other than that you just have to drive on and go right through."

"I can't wait till Maupin gets back. It really helps out when people give him his prayers. I know his family is going through a really hard time right now, much harder than we are," said Church. ♣

SMA gives 477th Med. Co. an... Unexpected welcome

It was a welcome home visit the 477th Medical Company didn't expect when the unit arrived home after its year-long deployment to Iraq on Jan. 29.

"If you're motivated Soldiers, say Hoo-ah!" said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston.

In unison, Soldiers of the 477th responded back to Preston's question with a loud and motivated Hoo-ah cheer.

On a cold and windy day where the snow flurries diffused a clear line of vision, an almost canceled helicopter flight took off from Minneapolis International Airport up to Duluth with Preston on board. This flight enabled Preston to make a surprise visit to the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center where the family members and friends greeted the returning Soldiers of the 477th.

Preston stood in front of the Soldiers and welcomed the unit home on behalf of himself, Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, Army chief of staff, and The Honorable Francis J. Harvey, secretary of the Army.

"If you look back over the last year that you spent over there (in Iraq), be very proud of the contribution you made," said Preston. He concluded by congratulating the unit on a job well done but also he took the time to shake hands with and present his sergeant major of the Army (SMA) coin to each Soldier.

"It's a huge honor," said Spc. Daniel P. Shook, health care specialist with the 477th Medical Company. "I'm shocked that he was able to come. It means a lot to me that the sergeant major of the Army would take time to come out and show his support."

"He told me when I tried to put this (the 477th visit) all together... he had never done a homecoming for a (Army) reserve component company since he's been in the SMA position. So it was a first," said Command Sgt. Maj. John S. Werner, command sergeant major of the 88th Regional Readiness Command.

During Preston's visit, the Vessey chapter of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) held an appreciation dinner in his honor.

Preston took the opportunity to cover two important topics that presently affect the Active Army, but also will shape the future of the Army Reserve and National Guard.

Preston first focused on the Army's transformation, which involves the Army growing from 33 brigades to 43 brigade units of action. This expansion would increase the number of deployable units in the Army system and



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston reaches to shake hands with Spc. Daniel P. Shook, 477th Medical Company, at a welcome home ceremony for the 477th Medical Company at the Duluth, Minn. Entertainment Convention Center.

redesign the Army's more threat-based Cold War force. Emerging from the retooling would be an army more capable and versatile in today's ongoing operations.

The transformation started in 2004 with three additional brigades. "By the end of 2006 we will have added a total of ten brigades to the active duty force, so that's how quickly this transformation is coming," said Preston.

Like the Active Army, the Army Reserve and National Guard will reallocate Soldiers within military occupational specialties (MOSs). Each Army component has about 100,000 to 115,000 Soldiers that will transition from high-density, low-demand MOSs to low-density, high-demand MOSs. This will help ease the frequency of mobilizations and add predictability and stability to Soldiers' lives.

"There's also an individual transformation right now currently ongoing within the Army," said Preston. "It's a change of mind set in how we see ourselves as Soldiers."

"As we look at ourselves as Soldiers it puts the focus back where it needs to be and not in our particular career fields, but on all of us as warriors," said Preston. "If you look at the modern battlefield today, it truly is a 360 degree battlefield regardless of what career field or occupational specialty you're from. All of us have to be warriors and members of a team and able to take the fight to the enemy."

Preston shared in his speech at the AUSA dinner that Jan. 15th marked his first year as the 13th sergeant major of the Army, and this was his first visit to Fort Snelling. ♦

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley, 88th RRC PAO

Whether helping recognize supportive employers, or educate employers who are violating USERRA, the ESGR is all about ... Taking care of Soldiers

There are stories. There is the one about the Army Reserve Soldier who is deployed to Iraq and returns to find that his employer converted his office into a janitor's closet. Or the soldier who was told if she leaves for a two-week annual training, she won't have a job to return to.

Then there are other stories. There is the employer who gives the deployed soldier pay differential, contin-

ued health and life insurance for the family, and 401(k) benefits.

Soldiers can do something about either of the above employers. There is help if the employer is giving the Soldier a hard time; Soldiers can also formally show their appreciation to supportive employers.

The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is part of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

It was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Soldiers and their civilian employers, and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment.

If the boss is supportive, let him know he is a patriot with the "Patriot Award" certificate of appreciation. ESGR sends a certificate and a lapel pin to the boss on behalf of the Department of Defense. Soldiers of any



rank can and should nominate their employers for the award. The certificate can be sent directly to the employer, or the soldier and a commander can go to the place of employment and present the certificate.

All nominations for the certificates are then used by the local ESGR committee for consideration for higher-level awards.

Help create a supportive employer by encouraging them to participate in a Bosslift. The Bosslift program is an event in which a unit will transport employers to training locations to observe soldiers training. An informed employer is more likely to be a supportive employer, and Bosslifts show employers what Soldiers do.

If a Soldier has problems with an employer, it may be that the employer isn't familiar with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA.). Open and honest communication is essential. Give the employer a copy of USERRA (A copy can be found on www.esgr.org) Soldiers should also inform their chain of command. Often a commander or legal officer can call the employer and solve the problems.

If a Soldier still has issues, contact the ESGR Ombudsmen Services Program. Trained ESGR volunteers and the Ombudsmen Services national staff are available to promptly respond to inquiries and conflicts.

The ombudsmen talk with the soldier and the employer. More often than not the conflict can be solved. If not, the soldier can file a complaint with the Labor Department. For tough cases, the soldier's case may be referred to the Justice Department. The following is an example of a recent USERRA case. (To read the actual court papers, go to <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/emp/papers.html>)

When Staff Sgt. Goodreau, Tennessee National Guard, returned

home from Iraq in 2003, his employer, Firestone, paid him his old wage, \$17.44 an hour. Goodreau argued that he should be paid \$18.60 an hour, the amount he would be receiving if he had not been deployed.

On March 29, Justice Department officials reached a settlement between Goodreau and Bridgestone/Firestone. The company paid back wages of more than \$6,000 and agreed

to comply with the re-employment law.

For more information, or to submit a nomination form for your employer, go to <https://www.esgr.org/employers2/onlineForms.asp?c=formMBIAP.asp>

Or call the main ESGR toll free number at 1-800-336-4590. ♦

By Susanne Aspley, 88th RRC PAO



Rick Chernick and Jeffrey Russold watch as Sgt. Brad Nickel explains how an M-203 grenade launcher works during a Boss Lift event at Fort McCoy, Wis.
Photo by Bill Geddes

Veteran's benefits

Know them, use them

More than 14,000 Soldiers from the 88th Regional Readiness Command have mobilized since Sept. 11. Every one of those Soldiers is now a veteran.

The word “veteran,” when used to describe someone who has served on active duty or in the Reserve Components, is a powerful term. It opens up a lot of benefits and opportunities that sometimes get lost in the descriptive part of what being a veteran is all about.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) manages and delivers important services to millions of vets nationally. The VA operates nationwide programs for health care, financial assistance and burial benefits, and manages a robust family of websites with additional information concerning special Veteran benefits. Everything from the traditional veterans’ assistance, to special medical benefits, to home loans and retraining funding can be found on their website along with local contact information. Visit www.va.gov or call 1-800-827-1000 to learn more.

Veterans’ benefits vary from state to state, as most legislative bodies provide programs, incentives and outright grants to thank veterans for their service to the nation without regard to whether there is a national program. Some benefits emerge from the unique needs of those vets and their families living in that state or territory.

Buying a home for the first time is a little easier for qualifying veterans thanks to the VA’s home loan program. Through this program, the VA can guarantee part of a home loan, refinance an existing loan, or give special grants for unique housing situations.

Another major offering from the VA department is a variety of life insurance options, including Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance for Soldiers who are still serving, Veterans’ Group Life Insurance for Sol-



Some veterans are eligible for medical benefits.

U.S. Army photo

diers are who have finished their service obligation, Family Group Life Insurance for dependents of veterans, Service Disabled Veterans’ Insurance, and Veterans’ Mortgage Life Insurance.

Veterans have preference in hiring for many local, state and federal jobs. Just for serving, veterans receive additional hiring points toward that nice job working downtown in the county or state office building. Injured vets have even more influence depending on the severity of their injuries.

Vets also get unemployment benefits, and again depending on the state, may receive more benefits than those who have been laid off or otherwise unemployed. Check with local employment service offices for more information.

Vets working at full-time jobs at the time of recall retain their previous job upon returning after a “readjustment period.” This period, which depends upon the period of service on active duty, is designed to give the veteran time with his or her family to readjust to civilian life and allow the Soldier to take care of important legal and personal needs. The vet needs to inform the employer in writing of his or her impending return and the request to

come back to their old job. Federal law, part of the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Act of 1994 (USERRA), calls for the restoration of the civilian job.

“If others in your category were promoted or received a salary increase (in your absence), you are entitled to that same promotion or increase as well,” said an official with the Minnesota office of the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS).

If during a company’s restructuring the Vet’s job was eliminated or otherwise taken, the Vet must be offered a job with similar wages, the same amount of responsibility, and in a similar category.

“We deal with a lot of Soldiers who come back and their civilian employees don’t apply the law to those positions. That’s where we get involved for the Soldier,” said the official.

Vets are also entitled to other benefits including special car tags IDing them as “Gulf War” or “Iraqi War” veterans, special one-time grants, educational grants or tuition waivers. They must be residents of that state at the time of their call up in order to take advantage of those special perks reserved for veterans.

Most of the major automobile manufactures in the United States – GM, Ford, DaimlerChrysler, Nissan, and even Volkswagen – have been offering special veteran incentives or “military cash” on top of their current incentives for sales and leasing of cars, trucks and vans. In

addition to cars, many other multinational and national firms – and their local offices – have been giving vets rebates or special “thank you” for their service. During last December, Starbucks gave away close to a million cups of coffee to anyone producing an ID card or wearing a military uniform. On their own, many other small businesses and firms also have been providing special gifts for returning veterans and their families.

Membership in veterans’ organizations such as the VFW, AMVETS, or the American Legion is akin to being “set for life.” In addition to the benefits offered through those organizations, the biggest benefit of belonging to a veterans’ association is kindred spirits. “We know what you’ve been through,” said Sharon Andres, office manager, VFW post 5555, “and fellow vets don’t shut you out like other people probably will.” That networking, in older days, really amounted to sharing and swapping stories, and perhaps helping with an annual community fair.

In today’s environment however, the networking of members of vet organizations and clubs – even those associated with the command or units one belong to, like the 88th Blue Devils or the 3rd Infantry Division Associations — can provide job leads and referrals, relocation assistance and other help to the Vet and his or her family. Many of the organizations also reach back to help disabled and homebound vets as well as volunteer for service within the community at large.

“The most important document (veterans) have is their DD Form 214,” said Ms. Peggy Kearns, director of the business office with the VA’s Minneapolis Veterans Medical Center. The DD 214 is the form which provides the basis for just about every imaginable Veteran benefit.

The veterans of the past paved the way for more than just free cups of coffee and the opportunity to exchange “war stories” over cold drinks at the local American Legion hall. The vets of the past created the means for today’s veterans – you and me – to have a wide variety of services, assistance and extra hands, even more than what they received short decades back.

The vets of yesterday, along with a thankful and grateful nation, want to roll out the welcome mat and encourage today’s vets to participate as part of those associations and programs which help vets make the successful transition from Soldier back to civilian. ♦

By Mike Walton, 88th RRC PAO

Most veterans are eligible for military burial honors.

Photo by Master Sgt. Janet Jones



Spring 2005

New Army combat uniform

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, June 14, 2004) - The Army will be fielding a new combat uniform designed by NCOs and tested by Stryker Brigade Soldiers in Iraq since October 2003.

Three different versions of the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) have been developed, and more than 10,000 uniforms have been produced and dragged through the sand in Iraq and at Army training centers. The wrinkle-free uniform with a digitized camouflage pattern began being fielded as an organizational clothing and individual equipment (OCIE) item in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom in February. The ACU will be placed in the fiscal year 2006 clothing bag and in the Army Military Clothing Sales stores in April. Fielding to the total Army should be complete by December 2007, said officials from the Program Executive Office, known as PEO Soldier.

There were 20 changes made to the uniform, to include removing the color black and adapting the digital print from the Marine Corps uniform to meet the needs of the Army, said Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Myhre, the Clothing and Individual Equipment non-commissioned officer in charge.

"The color scheme in the ACU capitalizes on the environments that we operate in," Myhre said. "The current colors on the ACU are green-woodland, grey-urban environments and sand brown-desert. The pattern is not a 100-percent solution in every environment, but a good solution across the board."

"This isn't about a cosmetic redesign of the uniform," said Col. John Norwood, the project manager for Clothing and Individual Equipment. "It's a functionality change of the uni-

form that will improve the ability of Soldiers to execute their combat mission."

Every change was made for a reason. The bottom pockets on the jacket were removed and placed on the shoulder sleeves so Soldiers can have access to them while wearing body armor. The pockets were also tilted forward so that they are easily accessible. Buttons were replaced with zippers that open from the top and bottom to provide comfort while wearing armor.

Patches and tabs are affixed to the uniform with Velcro to give the wearer more flexibility and to save the Soldier money, Myhre said. Soldiers can take the name-tapes and patches off their uniforms before laundering, which will add to the lifecycle of the patches. Also the cost to get patches sewn on will be eliminated, he added.

The ACU will consist of a jacket, trousers, moisture wicking t-shirt and the brown combat boots. It will replace both versions of the BDU and the desert camouflage uniform. The black beret will be the normal headgear for the ACU, but there is a matching patrol cap to be worn at the commander's discretion.

At \$88 per uniform, about \$30 more than the BDU, Soldiers will eventually reap gains in money and time by not having to take uniforms to the cleaners or shine boots.

The life of the ACU began in January 2003 when PEO Soldier teamed with Myhre, Master Sgt. Alex Samoba and Staff Sgt. Matt Goodine - from the 1st Stryker Brigade, Fort Lewis, Wash.

The team looked at a number of uniforms and took the best part of each uniform and combined it into one. They built their first prototype and delivered 25 uniforms to Stryker squads

at the National Training Center. After listening to their comments, the team went back to the lab and created prototype two.

Twenty-one uniforms were then delivered to Stryker Soldiers at the Joint Training and Readiness Center, Fort Polk, La.

"We watched them as they entered and cleared rooms, as they carried their rucksack and all of the things they had to be able to do in the uniform, and then we came up with prototype three," Myhre said.

Two issues of the third version were given to the Stryker Soldiers deploying to Iraq. Myhre was among a team who visited Iraq in Spring of 2004 to get more feedback from Soldiers.

"We would talk to Soldiers right after they had completed a mission while the benefits of the uniform were still fresh in their minds. We wanted to know how did the uniform help the mission."

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston is one of the ACU's biggest supporters. He said major command sergeants major had a chance to see the uniform and give advice toward the final version.

"We have not made a major change to our uniforms since the BDUs (battle dress uniforms) were introduced in the early 1980s," Preston said. "This new uniform performs well in multiple environments. Its new pockets and color designs are a result of feedback from Soldiers in combat. Every modification made on the uniform was designed with a specific purpose and not just for the sake of change." ♦

By Sgt. 1st Class Marcia Triggs,
Army News Service



Command Sgt. Maj. John S. Werner models the new Army Combat Uniform

Photo by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley

Uniform changes

1. Mandarin collar that can be worn up or down
2. Rank insignia centered on the front of the blouse
3. Velcro for wearing unit patch, skill tabs and recognition devices
4. Zippered front closure
5. Elbow pouch for internal elbow pad inserts
6. Knee pouch for internal knee pad inserts
7. Draw string leg cuff
8. Tilted chest pockets with Velcro closure
9. Three-slot pen pocket on bottom of sleeve
10. Velcro sleeve cuff closure
11. Shoulder pockets with Velcro
12. Forward tilted cargo pockets
13. Integrated blouse bellows for increased upper body mobility
14. Integrated Friend or Foe Identification Square on both left and right shoulder pocket flap.
15. Bellowed calf storage pocket on left and right leg
16. Moisture-wicking desert tan t-shirt
17. Patrol Cap with double thick bill and internal pocket
18. Improved hot-weather desert boot or temperate-weather desert boot
19. Two-inch, black nylon web belt
20. Moisture-wicking socks

The CSM's take

Since his initial Army enlistment in 1969, Command Sgt. Maj. John S. Werner has been issued a variety of uniforms. The new Army Combat Uniform (ACU) will be his sixth uniform issued to him.

"I like them. They wear very easily," said Command Sgt. Maj. John S. Werner, command sergeant major of the 88th Regional Readiness Command (RRC), as he commented on the new ACU uniform.

Brig. Gen. Michael W. Beasley, commanding general of the 88th RRC, the CSM and other general officers and command sergeants major in the US Army Reserve received the ACUs at the spring 2005 Army Reserve Senior Leader War Council.

With basic trainees being issued the ACU as part of their basic clothing issue in 2005, the Army will face a prolonged integration of the uniform. "It's up to the unit commander to designate the uniform for an event, but we need to keep in mind our basic trainees are going to come back with nothing but this (ACU)," said the CSM.

Blue Devils should expect the ACU to hit their local clothing sales store around April of 2006, with a uniform issuing time of 2006 to 2008. ♣

Preparing Food Preparers Faster

Story by Spc. Samuel Soza
367th Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment

With the increased rate of deployments, Army Reserve Soldiers are needed more than ever for their combat support roles, and some training courses have been condensed in order to generate deployment-ready Soldiers faster.

One such course is the crucial Food Service Specialist Course, offered to Soldiers at the 83rd Infantry Division Memorial U.S. Army Reserve Center in Whitehall, Ohio. The course is for Soldiers reclassifying or qualifying in this military occupational specialty.

Normally, the course is offered to Soldiers in a six-month format with training one weekend per month, but it has been condensed to a more intense two-week curriculum.

Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Simington Jr., 44, of the 9th Battalion, 8th Quartermaster Regiment, an instructor for the Food Service Specialist Course, says that this condensed style of course is better because it helps Soldiers retain the information and allows for more comprehensive instruction. Also, it dismisses the step of review, speeding the course even further.

"You get a chance to do everything, one thing at a time," the Peoria, Ill. native remarked. "It collectively combines everything at one time."

Spc. Ranee M. Staab, 24, a member of the 826th Ordinance Company, based out of Madison, Wis., is an administrative specialist reclassifying as a food specialist. She agreed with Simington, stating that the blocked format has helped her.

"This style of (inactive duty training) is better since you learn everything all at once," she said. "Other-

wise, you forget everything."

Staab recently finished a one-year tour in Iraq with the 209th Quartermaster unit near Fallujah and Al Ramadi under an involuntary transfer. After returning, the Beaver Dam, Wis. native decided to reclassify in order to become eligible for promotion and to secure her spot in the kitchen section of her home unit, thereby avoiding any more involuntary transfers.

During the two-week course, Soldiers learn basic cooking and baking skills as well as food safety.

The class starts with sanitation, safety conditions in the kitchen and nutrition, according to Staab. Then Soldiers learn how to use their utensils and prepare dishes using the ingredients from their recipe cards.

Simington said that attitudes during the course are watched as part of the evaluation of the Soldiers.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Chester Nairne, head instructor for the Food Service Specialist Course, an interest in cooking is a prerequisite for the course.

"You have to be passionate about food," Nairne said. The 51-year-old, who hails from Livonia, Mich., also served as a cook in the Navy.

He said he enjoys his job as an instructor.

"I'll do this until it's not fun anymore," he said.

The November class was the first to go through the new course style at the Whitehall reserve center, though many more are expected to follow.

The class contained two future instructors, Nairne said.

The culmination of the course was the Thanksgiving meal for the staff of the reserve center.

Preparation for the meal began the day before with rolls made from



Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Simington Jr., an instructor for the Food Service Specialist Course, gives food preparation advice to Pfc. James M. Hurt, in Whitehall, Ohio.

Photo by Spc. Samuel A. Soza

scratch. Every aspect of the Food Service Specialist Course was evaluated as the Soldiers prepared everything from fried cabbage and mashed potatoes to pineapple upside-down cake and pies.

The graduation for the new cooks was held Thursday, November 18, 2004.

From there, the Soldiers had completed the first half of their training. The next part, phase two, is much more field oriented, both Nairne and Simington agreed. The Soldiers familiarize with the MKT, or Mobile Kitchen Trailer, a lab kitchen that will provide each cook with their own pans and utensils.

"The most important thing in this MOS is to want to do this job," Nairne said. "It's a big moral booster. You do your very best. No one should ask for more and you should expect the best of yourself." ♦

Health Care Offered to Reservists

National Guard and Reserve members will now be offered the choice of military health care coverage for as long as eight years after they return to civilian life. The policy will affect the more than 400,000 National Guard and Reserve members mobilized since September 2001 for the fight against terrorism. Only those who remain in the Guard or Reserve after they are demobilized will be eligible. Until now, Guard and Reserve members could retain health care coverage under the Defense Department's TRICARE system for no more than six months after they left active duty. Under the new arrangement they could retain coverage for at least one year and as long as eight years, depending on the length of their mobilization and the length of their commitment to remain in the Guard or Reserve. They would pay monthly premiums ranging from \$50 to \$150 a month for individual coverage, depending on their rank, and from \$100 to \$300 a month for family coverage, depending on rank. ♦

DFAS, myPay: Beware of Scams

Defense Finance and Accounting Service customers should be aware that the DFAS agency and its web-based system, myPay, do not ask for personal or financial information by e-mail.

Individual DFAS customers can enter the myPay Web site with a personal identification number to access the secure financial page to make changes to personal information. "Phishing" attacks trick people into passing personal information by luring them to false corporate Web sites that mimics a legitimate organization's site or by requesting personal information be sent in a return e-mail. ♦

Veterans Affairs Centers Offer Grief Counseling to Military Families

In an unprecedented expansion of its traditional client base, the Department of Veterans Affairs is offering grief counseling to families of servicemembers who die while on active duty. VA's Office of Readjustment Counseling offers the counseling services at its 206 community-based Vet Centers throughout the United States, including Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The pro-

gram also serves families of reservists and National Guardsmen who die while activated for federal duty. No medical diagnosis is required to seek help, and services are completely confidential. Families requesting more information or services can also contact the VA's Readjustment Counseling Service directly at (202) 273-9116 or by email at veteran.center@hq.med.va.gov ♦

GI Bill Apprenticeship and OJT Program Offers Up to \$12,000

If you are currently in the Reserve Component, the On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program offers you an alternative way to use your VA (GI Bill) education and training benefits. While you are being trained for a new job, you can receive monthly training benefits from the Veterans Affairs in addition to your regular salary, that means you can receive up to \$753 a month (\$216 for Reserve) tax-free, on top of your regular salary! That's up to \$12,000 in cash benefits over 2

years, for training in an On-The-Job or Apprenticeship training program. You may be eligible if you are otherwise eligible for the GI Bill either under the Active Duty (Veteran) or Reserve GI Bill programs. Contact your local State Approving Agency (SAA). Your SAA will help you get started on the process and answer any questions you may have.

To get more information on the GI Bill directly from the VA, call toll free 1-888-GI-BILL-1. ♦

Making Arrangements for Your Pets

Responding to stories about a rise in the number of pets being relinquished by soldiers and their families facing deployment, The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has asked military personnel to explore all possible options before giving animals up for adoption.

The HSUS website offers a range of tips to members of the armed forces with pets, and downloadable examples of pet care agreements, pet personality profiles, and a checklist for military pet owners.

For more information call 202-452-1100 or visit The HSUS at <http://www.hsus.org/militarypets>. ♦

Grants for Illinois Guard, Reserve

Families of Guard and Reserve members in Illinois may be eligible for a \$500 grant to help cover expenses after their family member is called to active duty.

The Illinois Military Family Relief Fund also provides grants up to \$2,000 for families in financial need due to deployment or to troops injured or killed in combat.

To be eligible, servicemembers must be in pay grades no higher than O-3 or W3.

To apply for the fund, the application can be downloaded at www.operationhomefront.org. ♦

New Program Offers Subsidized Child Care to Guard, Reserve

The Defense Department has joined forces with national agencies to help Guard and Reserve families in finding and affording childcare while Mom or Dad is deployed in support of the global war on terrorism. The new program is dubbed Operation Military Child Care. DoD, in partnership with the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, which administers the program, designed this initiative to benefit those who do not live near military installations.

While OMCC doesn't fully subsidize childcare, it does work to reduce the financial burden. The fees are based on a sliding scale that takes into consideration total family income and the care provider's actual cost, among other things. To take part in the program, a family member would apply

through NACCRRA via a special Web site or by a toll-free call to (800) 424-2246. The child-care provider also must apply — an important step because of how the subsidy, which comes through the Children and Youth office, is paid out.

The program officially kicked off March 3, but has been operational as a pilot program since late November 2004.

About 40 families are through the application process.

NACCRRA also supports the Guard and Reserve through a program called Operation Child Care. OCC is a voluntary NACCRRA program that provides up to six hours of free child care to Guard and Reserve families whose deployed servicemember is returning home for rest and recuperation. ♦

Illinois Veterans Benefits

Veterans benefits offered by the State of Illinois include education grants, scholarships and financial aid. The Illinois Veteran Grant (IVG) Program pays tuition and certain fees at all Illinois state-supported colleges, universities and community colleges for eligible Illinois veterans. Financial aid is provided annually to each child between the ages of 10 and 18 years of a veteran who died or became totally disabled as a result of service in the Armed Forces. Moreover, each county in the state is entitled, annually, to one honorary scholarship in the University of Illinois, for the benefit of children of veterans of WWI, WWII, Korean and Vietnam Conflict periods with preference being given to the children of deceased and disabled veterans. Visit www.military.com for more information. ♦

Army Restores Tuition Assistance And Offers Back Payment

Army tuition-assistance funding has been restored following a period in February and March when demand exceeded funding available at many installations.

The Army's Human Resources Command has also issued an exception to policy authorizing "after-the-fact" tuition assistance reimbursement for Soldiers who incurred personal expense to continue with college courses.

"This is a one-time exception due to the extraordinary circumstances in February and March when many Education Centers were unable to provide tuition assistance," said L. Dian Stoskopf, chief of Human Resource Command's Education Division, in a memorandum authorizing installation education centers to offer the exception.

"Our hope is that we can reach every one of the Soldiers who ran into a problem with tuition assistance," said Patricia Dumire, chief of Army Continuing Education Services for the Army's Installation Management Agency.

The Installation Management Agency distributes tuition-assistance funding from the Army to the installation education centers.

This year the Army Budget Office has allocated funding to IMA on a quarterly basis. College enrollment timelines typically peak in September thru March, which doesn't quite fit into the new system of equal quarterly allotments. In the future, funding for tuition assistance will be centralized to eliminate the problem, officials said.

Funding for tuition assistance dried

up unexpectedly in March because of exceptionally high Soldier demand, officials said.

"In a way, this is a good news story," Dumire said. "Soldiers are taking advantage of their tuition assistance benefits to enhance their education."

The Installation Management Agency has received \$21.4 million to subsidize the immediate tuition assistance shortfall. Soldiers who paid for courses out of pocket or who did not register for a class due to lack of funding should go to their installation education center by April 15 to make arrangements for tuition reimbursement or late enrollment.

Requests for special exception after April 15 will be forwarded to Human Resources Command for consideration. ♦

Command Climate Surveys

First of all, I'd like to thank all our service members, family members and civilian employees for their devotion and dedicated service. These are stressful times and I'm amazed daily at the drive, motivation and professionalism of our organization.

The amount of stress that comes with mobilization in any capacity takes its toll in many ways. The fear of the unknown, separation from family and friends, financial hardships, missed special days and events are all ingredients which can and do lead to concerns. One major concern is, "How do we gauge the impacts on a personal level?"

The answer, Lt. Gen. James Helmly, US Army Reserve Command commander, decided was to conduct a Command Climate Assessment (CCA) for the Army Reserve. His decision was helped after the events of Abu Ghraib and many reported sexual assaults. Helmly asked the USARC Equal Opportunity staff to show him what units had conducted a Command Climate Survey (CCS) as well as what units had trained EO advisors and EO representatives. The reported results were not good, to say the least.

As per AR 600-20, Army command policy, company level com-

manders, to include headquarters companies, must complete a Command Climate Survey within 180 days of taking command and annually thereafter. The results must then be logged into the Department of the Army EO database. Many commanders who have completed a CCS, however, did not log completion, thus did not receive credit for the task.

The new CCA ordered by Helmly is an online system. The survey can be completed anywhere: home, work, library, etc. Commanders must gather a few pieces of demographic information and contact Terry Stegemeyer (USARC POC) on the global e-mail or at 404-464-9010. In turn, Stegemeyer and the surveying unit commander will determine a Window of Opportunity (WOO) for completion. Stegemeyer issues access codes based on the number of soldiers and civilians in the unit.

Once issued from the commander to the participant, the access code can only be used once within the agreed upon WOO. When the WOO closes, a summary is generated automatically for the commander. The commander must then have his/her representative log onto <https://eo.pentagon.mil> and submit completion by UIC. While in the site, upcoming training should also

be inputted.

Commanders should review the results of the CCA and make an action plan for mandatory equal opportunity training. Results (good or bad) become discussion topics for their Consideration of Others program and Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) training.

The stresses of our current situation show no sign of subsiding anytime soon. Units that assess the situation and conduct their Consideration of Others discussions have proven to be much more cohesive, combat effective and have far fewer complaints. The CCA is mandatory and directed by the USARC commander. Each MSC has received information on this task. However, it has become apparent not all units have received the word. Please contact your headquarters for further information concerning the CCA.

Please take the time to ensure this is completed and completed correctly. It will make a difference and just may show you something you may not have seen or thought of. ♦

Richard (Rich) Cox
Equal Opportunity Specialist
88th RRC

VA Home Loan Calculator

Use the Military.com VA loan calculator to find out how much a VA home loan can save you in upfront costs. VA loans do not require a down payment for homes less than \$359,650, reducing your up-front expenses and allowing you to purchase a more expensive home. Enter a proposed home price and interest rate, press "Calculate" and view how much less up-front cash you will need. ♦

Reserve "Drill" Pay Calculator

Military.com has just updated its battle assembly pay calculators for 2005. Enter your pay grade, time in service, and number of assemblies, and the calculator will compute your pay. These pay rates are effective as of January 1, 2005. Typically, one training weekend includes four assemblies. E-1 personnel with less than four months of service earn \$35.49 per assembly. ♦

New "Genereic" Army ID Cards

The DoD has begun issuing new military ID cards that do not distinguish between active duty and reserve members. Before, the cards clearly identified an individual as "Active," "Reserve" or "Guard." The distinction was made to limit commissary privileges for Reserve and Guard members. The 2004 Defense Authorization Act did away with the commissary restriction, eliminating a need for separate IDs, so they will be replaced during the next 2 ½ years. ♦



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